Winter 1947

OUTPOSTS

9

Poems by:	*Page*	*Poems by:*	*Page*
NORMAN NICHOLSON	1	JAN GERKE	6
KENNETH GEE	1	CYRIL HUGHES	7
WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE	2	JOHN CREMONA	8
JOHN HEATH-STUBBS	2	H. G. ANDREWS	8
JAMES PARKHILL-RATHBONE	3	J. B. PICK	9
ALEX COMFORT	4	ELLODE COLLINS	9
CHARLES ORWELL	5	MURIEL SPARK	10
EDGAR FOXALL	5	CLIVE SANSOM	10
PAUL DEHN	6	DOROTHY UNA RATCLIFFE	11
		FRANCIS NEWBOLD	11

Article:
BRIAN ROWLEY . . . The Poems of Paul Dehn - - - - - 12

Book Reviews by:
GEORGE WOODCOCK, HARDIMAN SCOTT, ALEC SMITH,
LIONEL MONTEITH, DEREK STANFORD, and the Editor 15-20

OUTPOSTS

9

THE MEGALITHS

NORMAN NICHOLSON

HEEDLESS, unheeded of the years they stand;
The rain drips off their chins and lichens spread
A moist green skin along each stony hand
That gropes among the bones of the grey dead.

They did not see the forests flow and fall—
Juniper's blue wave by the fellside shore—
Nor barley batten by the coddling wall,
Nor purple ploughland swipe across the moor.

They hold death in them. Skulls have moulded ears
That deaf remain to curlew, crow and dove.
The human winds blow past them; each one fears
The hoarded ache of a malignant love.

ANOTHER PLACE, ANOTHER TIME

KENNETH GEE

I have been there before, away beyond
Limit of leaf and stone and seven seas,
Where time was no man's telling any more.
I knew each tree and meadow of the place
As if I'd planned the acres on a map,
Felled farmhouse rafters on the wooded slope
And paced out from the spring the now worn track
Where they came home so many times to sleep,
Whom once I knew, sons and their fathers.
I heard their women's parish tales
Told while they waited by the well for water.
I watched the spring days waking like young girls.

This tale I lived I cannot write.
Won from that land was only a dying song,
A breath on the wind that blows my morning in:
Though when the buds are open in the spring,
That time has echoes in the cries of birds
Come northward home on heel of winter.
There beyond windows, pathways lead to blue
Rims I long to cross, and valleys I'd enter.

IMAGES OF POWER

WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

THE golden gates of the sea open on a vista,
There is an avenue of lilies burning in the sun,
The virgins are like slender trees beside the fountains,
Amid the sleeping lions the long-legged children run.

Topless are the towers high in the singing sunset,
Midnight has entangled them in a net of stars,
The sun opens his mouth of gold and laughs upon them,
The white winged fiery horses are his avatars.

The cities are clothed in the radiant rapture of the morning
Which rises out of the immense wonder of the sea ;
The noise of cataracts is in the people's ears,
Their dreaming lips are purple with futurity.

Those who have bathed them in the precious lakes of wine
Are crowned with the golden ears of infinite corn ;
Their hair is like the curling tendrils of the vine,
In their rejoicing eyes an innocent Titan is born. . . .

ST. SYLVESTER ON THE CAPITOL

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

YOU, black and ancient serpent harbouring here
Beneath the broken peristyle, upon
This windy slope among the seven hills,
Who, coiled and brooding on the rubble-heaps,
In the long evening sunlight gaze
With still and glassy eyes
Down to the white and ageing roofs of Rome ;

O wise snake, darling of the mighty Mother,
Licking with darting tongue
Your cold lips which have missed this many a year
The little honeyed cakes, the dish of milk
By pious hands placed at your sun-baked burrow,
Whose overhanging stone
Is gay with cushioned leaves of saxifrage ;

You, the most ancient tenant of this place,
And duly known and honoured
When a few scattered herdsmen
Pastured their flocks on this yet innocent earth—
You saw the little country goblins come,
Sabine and Tuscan gods,
And here set up their booths, till newcomers
Taught them to house in marble . . .
And now no more
Will the rich citizen with sacrifice
Be client for their luck, or up this way
At the first morning light
The pontiff with the silent virgin climb.

But I, an old man chased by enemies,
Like burrowing owl or badger
Must dispossess you now, you jealous snake,
And with my wrinkled hands
Scoop out the earth, and so enlarge your cranny
To make myself a cell;

And wait with sleepless, horny eyes
Beneath the irony of the watching moon,
Gazing along this road, until there come
A broken Caesar, with the putrid scars
Festering in his flesh, and hateful dreams
Of dying children and a bloody pool,
To seek the serpent's wisdom, and a cure.

TO A POET

JAMES PARKHILL-RATHBONE

WHITE his bones upon the hills:
He lies dead to sin and folly.
While his broken skull-top fills,
Dew shall drown his melancholy.

Sun and moon and stars shall shine
On his bones till all be ended,
Though the critics' page and line
May clothe him in a robe more splendid.

Yet the skull beside the bones :
That shall grin until it passes,
Finding humour in the stones
And oddities among the grasses.

Knowing well the dust that humbles,
Now immune to sin and folly,
It shall grin until it crumbles,
Being proof to melancholy.

A RIDER TURNED TO STONE

ALEX COMFORT

A RIDER turned to stone
caught in mid-leap by time
even the hoof-sparks frozen to glittering dust

or a stone footprint where
scales and enormous claws
frighten the quarrymen even so long after ;

something blown from Northward
or between us and the sun
makes words fall frozen as we spit them out ;

all those dark glaciers
come down from history,
the songs themselves tinkle like icicles

perhaps more durable,
transparent as the cage
which holds a mammoth, lifelike but not living ;

somehow preserved, we are
waiting the thaw, the axes,
to bring us out again, no hair destroyed

but in another time
when glaciers go back
and only leave round boulders on the fields

cold, cold ; come closer, closer.

UNWILLING SURVIVOR

CHARLES ORWELL

I AM the man who is never there
when silence whispers to darkness,
and you turn round on the stair.

I am the sudden gust of doubt
that comes upon you stealthily
and blows your reason out.

I am your pitiful curse, your plea, your vow,
your shadow thrown upon the whitewashed wall,
the deep companion of your here and now.

Back on history's first page
I was the smile on the lips of your god,
I was his terrible rage.

As you fell while swinging from tree to tree,
you killed me, and you made of me
the tired ghost of your prehistory.

MAGDALENE

EDGAR FOXALL

LADY, your chastity
is not within our b ckoning,
the virtue you have lo t
is your own reckoning.
We'll not despise you, then,
since we are all despised ;
heart, hunger, mouth and pen,
are sneering now at men
whose sight but makes them blind.
Lady, you shall be prized
as one who lost the world
for a small span, and then
learned from the ambient rose
of the thin lip sneer-curled,
that death alone is kind,
and love and death are foes.

CASUALTY

PAUL DEHN

I BRING you the stripling body of my friend,
Dead at nineteen ; mouth broken like a branch,
Hazel-nut skull cracked wide and the white kernel
Spilt in my hand.

I bring the body of my friend. His blood
(On this glass evening when the woods are shallows)
Is coral curling in green-walnut water
Against my side.

I bring you the body. Delve in the last light
And hide with mould what I may not with metaphor,
The gristle nose, the oyster eyeball. Maggot,
I bring you meat.

ON LOVING A DREAMER

JAN GERKE

SHARE her dream ! —Ecstatic smile,
Inward flight as you embrace,
Wistful wonder on her face :
She has found her magic isle.

Smooth the anxious frown she wore,
Bent in flutter to escape.
While you hold her yielding shape,
She has found enchanted shore.

Close to you she is remote.
Hush yourself and hide your fear.
Hold her cruel absence dear.
Witness what you must not note.

You are but the smallest spark
Of the flame that for her burns.
When from dreamland she returns
Keep your anguish in the dark.

THE COMING OF TALIESIN

CYRIL HUGHES

OLD moon, screw up that wizened face
For I have need of moonlight, being mad,
And the days heavy on my antiquity.
I shall not be amazed though all the race
Of moon philosophers cease playing dead
And without prologue live again in me.

I was that one twined on an oaken bough,
Leech with a golden sickle to incise ;
But wood makes mould upon this sodden ground
And the wind-whistler turns worm-fellow now,
Whom truth once knotted into oaken days,
Whom vision fashioned to a myth of sound.

All simple craft and country subtlety
Rustle our foliage and display our sin :
That, being wise, we favoured ignorance,
That, being simple, we were mystery :
Here's where the privy worm first entered in—
Sin was the lichen of old innocence.

Coeveal Homer burned his strings of fire,
Struck the brass petulance of his deities
Until they clangoured down the cynic years
Compelling silence for the seven-towned crier :
We were the woody wandering of a breeze
And the leaved promise of incipient tears.

Nor could we think, upon our groping isle,
Beyond the bubble fever and the froth,
We found the peace to smooth the brow of God,
Man and the satyr, and dispensed a smile
Halcyon with knowledge to the heart of death :
We knew, and like our rival could but nod.

And though we cast our withy twigs to hook
A fish of wisdom by the foolish mouth
Our appetite was keener than our skill
And our rough chatter empty as the brook,
Till He came, soft as singing, from the south
And all our crooked questioning was still.

BEYOND TARIFA

For Penny

JOHN CREMONA

BEYOND Tarifa and the fallen stars
Fizzing like wildfire-fishes on the sea
Of Portugal, I urge my memory
To turn from seagull's shriek to ghost-guitars.

But Spain is passing by. Encaged by bars
Of longitude and latitude, I see
Only the starless sky, disastrously
Impoverished and marked by flaming scars.

Time and fast engines, Dear, draw us apart,
But vainly tug at this connecting thread
Of memory, when suddenly you start

Singing, a bird that nests among the dead
Leaves of the autumn in my lonely heart,
When night and silence bend my yielding head.

THE SILENT FACES

H. G. ANDREWS

PEER forth with rheumy eyes
and heads awry
from curtained windows and
dark doors ajar
old women, barefoot, swathed
in tattered gowns ;
while bent gray-headed men,
their trembling fingers
clutching the casement-bars,
gaze down to mark the
conquerors clattering by,
and even in the valour of their youth,
remembering it,
fall soft with fear,
and quail before so bold a stature,
so grim, so cold a glance.

An urchin climbs the
  tottering barricade
and stares
  and swings in silence
    on the broken gate.

DAY IN SUNSHINE

J. B. Pick

THE eye disfigures what it sees ;
  To-day's bright water is too pure.
We kill life with our consciences.
Only the body can endure
The cloud-born mountains
And the mountain clouds,
The future's suddenness of fountains.
Thoughts are shrouds
Which cover over what we bless
And make of vision—consciousness.

NIGHT SONG

Ellode Collins

AND darkness lifts the bands of time
  Upon the wounds that will not heal.
A throbbing star and night-bird's cry,
Crossing the margin of the sense,
Break on the innermost ear and eye.

Now in the comet's wheeling wake
The heart goes whoring for its own,
Harrowing the fallow fields of light
For harvests gone or yet unsown.

The owl's cry and the candle glow
Epitomizing transience
Gather in flame and feathered sound
Meanings beyond the reach of sense ;
The steel of night shall cauterize,
By heat of thought, burn out the wound.

SONG

MURIEL SPARK

KNOW, my love, that dream and flesh
Shall at last forsake,
For the smile will end in ash
And the word in smoke
And the thought in wreck.

Think you the indulgent eyes
Will as fondly brood
When the sentiment is dross
And the look is flood
And the kiss is weed?

Lover, take your solace while
Form and image last,
Or the hand is icicle
And the lip is frost
And the touch is ghost.

ON HEARING *THE CELTIC LAMENT*

CLIVE SANSOM

ONLY the harp and the violin,
When the heart is frozen,
Can tell for the human heart
Such poignancy of grief.

Their wordless, articulate music
Rises like song from the keening strings—
Wounding the fibres of sense, and healing,
In one proud cry of pain.

O here is art's transfiguration,
Where intensest beauty and sadness meet—
Here for an instant, scathed and scatheless,
We are borne like gods on the fearless strings.

TOY SHIP

DOROTHY UNA RATCLIFFE

IN a rock-pool left by the tide
At high water springs, a child's ship lies ;
The sails are torn ; under its hull
Sea-urchins grow. A wheatear cries.
The bowsprit is wedged in a clump of thrift
And so the little ship cannot drift.

Some cables away stands a roofless croft,
An old apple-tree and a trailing rose.
What happened to the child who loved the ship
And the tree and the rose ? Nobody knows,
For the ship has lain in the pool so long :
All's silent save for the wheatear's song.

PRAYER FOR A HORROR CAMP

FRANCIS NEWBOLD

THIS camp was never liberated. No
shining soldiers ever reached the borders
of this dark land to slay the robot warders
and bury decently the pyramidal dead.

Intrepid heroes have tried and failed
(always a hitch in the plan of campaign
or high winds drove them off their course,
they died in the desert or were shot down in flames),

yet the poor emaciated captives
dying by inches are hopeful still,
watching for wings over the hill
and glint of sun on the golden equipment.

O shining skymen, when will you touch down
through the black vapours of this haunted land ?

THE POEMS OF PAUL DEHN

BRIAN A. ROWLEY

THE MOST obvious quality of Paul Dehn's poems is their liveliness. "Listen, I have heard him chuckle in derelict places" begins *Without Any Warning*: at once the attention is aroused, to be sustained as the poem develops. This liveliness is achieved partly by metre—and is notably absent in the slower-measured *St. Aubin d' Aubigné*—and by the use of crisp vowel sounds, alliteration, and repetitive syntactical devices; but also by the April mood characteristic of the poet. Words such as 'wind' or 'windless', 'tops', 'kites' and 'larks' are frequent, and no doubt more detailed analysis would reveal the prevalence of other analogous words. Such technical devices are not, of course, valuable in themselves, and are deleterious where their effect runs counter to the poem's mood, or where by their insistence they distract attention from the whole poem, as in the lines "Strike dumb the dream/That deafens his drugged ear to the crack of doom . . ." in *New Year*: 1947. In general, however, the appositeness of Dehn's technique is apparent, in lines such as those describing "boys' yachts/Jinking in a sea-wind" (*Spring*, 1946). Yet even liveliness is not necessarily a virtue—though in an age of analytical and introspective writing it may be a relief—unless the poem is itself strong enough to hold the reader's attention, once aroused.

This, Paul Dehn's poems almost always are; in the first place, because of their intensely-actualised and visual imagery. "And wagtails glide about the lawn/As though on little wheels"—this single, compact image gives an immediate print in the reader's mind and enlarges his experience. "The catapulted curlews dive" (from the same poem *From a Valley*), "Under the sheet where sly hands go shuttling" (*New Year*: 1947), "Rams to the music muster/Their horned and tenor herds . . ." (*Telegraph Poles*) are further examples of a descriptive imagery showing imagination and discipline of form. Best of all is the following, from *Hardangerfjiord*: "Here, where a pony-footed wind/Kicks on the cobbled water . . ." The analogy has both fidelity and felicity; and the extension of the metaphor by the epithet 'cobbled', so exact on both the levels, is masterly. This ability to sustain an image or set of images throughout a poem is typical of Dehn. Other examples are the images running through *Telegraph Poles* and, more poetically conclusive, the sea-images in *Lament for a Sailor*, culminating in the moving last line.

I do not, however, claim that Dehn's images are always so exact. At times enthusiasm, or the sheer intractability of poetic material,

defeats him, as in the discordant "cherries/Wink on the trees like soap-suds in the sun" amid the marine imagery of *Hardangerfjiord*, or in the inadequate household imagery of *Supreme Commander's Song*, cynical in intent. Indeed, on the whole, the clever and cynical poems—*Habituè*, *New Year* 1947, and some of the *Songs for a Cherry-Stone Count* — are least successful; they show neither real sympathy nor real bitterness. Another fault is occasional satisfaction with the trite phrase—"a country's pride" in *Supreme Commander's Song*—or idea—*London Train* or *St. Aubin d'Aubigné*.

But descriptive imagery, vivid, exact, concise, sustained as Paul Dehn's is, tends, unaccompanied, to that sterility of almost formal decoration against which Coomaraswamy's *Figures of Speech and Figures of Thought* sounds a warning. At best, it cannot produce more than the minor perfection of Telegraph Poles, perhaps the best, and certainly the most succinct, example of one side of his work:

> "These, in the dusk, are bars
> On the lit score of Spring,
> When early-comer stars
> Lean outward, listening.
> Rams to the music muster
> Their horned and tenor herds
> Where, on a wire stave, cluster
> The semi-quaver birds."

This poem has the perfection of a jewelled miniature, and yet remains in a minor genre. Only a human content can give the timeless and fundamental quality of great poetry.

This human content is achieved in those of Dehn's poems connected with the war. So far, he does not seem to have felt and expressed a human emotion in poems of a more personal nature, except in the little *Song for a Thief*, hitherto unpublished, which, not entirely clear in conception, is moving in intensity. This personal emotion will doubtless come; and the war poems augur well for its expression. I have already referred to the last line of *Lament for a Sailor*—"But you are the quietest fish in the sea." The dominant reaction underlying this statement is not one of conventional sorrow or of idle recrimination, but of active acceptance. That is to say, death—the extreme case of suffering—is a part of experience, not an alien and arbitrary end to that experience. *The Sweet War Man is Dead*, *Casualty* and *Armistice* express this attitude in specific relationship to the recent war; and the latter poem shows clearly Dehn's understanding that both death and war continue in less violent form (symbolised by the corn sprouting from the battle-fields), an understanding, that is, of the continuum of experience.

Allied to this is his sense of the unity underlying apparently divergent natural objects, brought out in the range of images unified in *From a Valley*. The resulting sympathy—I use the word literally—links his poems with the essentially Metaphysical English tradition, to which the clever cynicism of many of his contemporaries is unrelated. The loss is theirs, for continuity is of value to the poet in his task of occupying the territory of the reader's mind, the more so in an age when everyone deplores the growing gap between artist and public and few attempt to close it. If Dehn's vision of death in terms of skull and worms, and not of patriotic responses (" Maggot, I bring you meat", is his comment in *Casualty*) seems a morbid preoccupation, we need only refer again to the central English tradition, from Webster and the great trio of Shakespearian tragedies to Owen and Eliot. The vision is universal.

Yet in a literal sense the poetry is not in the pity but in the poetry. Imaginitive acuteness and emotional universality—respectively the dominant factors of the two sides of Dehn's poetry—are not themselves productive of poetry. In the end, poetry comes down, not to literary or philosophic qualities, but to lines and stanzas ; in particular, to lines and stanzas of such a contour and cadence that they appear inevitable : " . . . where a pony-footed wind/Kicks on the cobbled water . . ." ; " But you are the quietest fish in the sea." ; " And the law/Permits me to have loved them, who lack flesh "; " O Christ have pity on them, where they walk." I quote these lines from memory, because they have been absorbed into my own experience and retained for their cogent expression of emotional perception ; in a word, for their poetry. It is because of the frequency of such lines and stanzas in his poems, and because of his directness and consciousness of his own capabilities, so that his poems are free from strain and sound exactly right, that I consider Paul Dehn most worthy of study among the younger poets now emerging.

Note :- Paul Dehn has written only about 25 poems in four years, and no collection of these is yet available. For convenience, I append a note of the periodicals in which the poems mentioned above were printed.

Without Any Warning (The Listener, 8th Feb. 45) ; *St. Aubin d'Aubigné* (Spectator, 15th June 45) ; *New Year* : 1947 (unpublished) ; *Spring* 1946 (Time and Tide, 18th May 46) ; *From a Valley* (The Listener, 5th Sept, 1946), *Telegraph Poles* (New Statesman, 22nd Sept. 45) ; *Hardangerfjiord* (The Listener, 29th Nov. 45) ; *Lament for a Sailor* (New Statesman, Jan. 43) ; *Supreme Commander's Song* (Outposts No. 7) ; *Habitué* (Tomorrow, U.S., Feb. 46) ; *London Train* (unpublished); *The Sweet War Man is Dead* (Horizon, No. 63) ; *Casualty* (Outposts No. 9) ; *Armistice*, retitled from *For Those Who Are Alive*, (Outposts No. 6).

The Signal to Engage: Alex Comfort (Routledge, 5s. od.).

COMFORT'S early books of verse were concerned with the ubiquity of death in our modern world—and particularly the living death of daily existence in a totalitarian society. They were poems of exploration and diagnosis; only occasionally did the poet break the solemn, contemplative rhythm of his lines, the cumulative firmness of his imagery, to allow the raising of his voice in active protest.

In the last two or three years, however, Comfort has moved forward into social militancy. His opposition to authority and social uniformity has become more positive, less nihilistic. And this change is reflected in his latest verse. It is more nearly devoted to a social purpose, and reflects very directly Comfort's concern for the evil and injustice of the world.

This has brought a very considerable change to the nature and style of the poems. They have turned from 'elegies' into 'songs'; their subjects have become predominantly revolutionary; they are filled with protest, indignation, incitement.

To express this new attitude, there has been an inevitable change in the technique of his verse. The rhythm has become more staccato, the images less contemplative and more reliant on their individual impact. There is a tendency to break up the echoing, sufficient lines of his earlier verse, and the images have begun to lose their concrete brilliance, to become vaguer and more abstract, as in such lines as:

> "For us who fight now, there are no signatures—
> No kings or godheads set their names on leaves
> Beauty like us has a more perilous life,
> And Freedom is not written on the stars—"

To me this represents a decline on earlier poems—although it is necessary to add that some poems in *The Signal to Engage* still have the familiar firmness and power of Comfort's former books. It would seem as though he has not yet wholly assimilated his new social attitude into his poetic technique. He seems to be passing through a transitional period, at the end of which I am sure his poetry will have reached a new and more powerful integration of form and idea. But at present there are still roughnesses and stridencies which detract from

the general effect. Yet there are also verses like this, which seem to confirm more than ever Comfort's poetic significance :—

> " She is my field, and in her furrows run
> my ways like rain, and the crops of her shadows
> are pools, are a wild sea. And she has mountains
> stranger than feathers, hard as fishes. There
> fall in her hollows shadows of orchard trees
> that follow the moon's circle like a tide
> grassy nets that move on the dropped apples."

GEORGE WOODCOCK

Poems of Dedication : Stephen Spender (Faber 6s. od.)
Westward Look : Robert Herring (Maclellan 6s. od.)
Selected Verse : Joyce Chadwick (Cyril Edwards 4s. 6d.)

OCCASIONALLY there are echoes of the earlier Spender—" The folded future active street " —but for the most part here is Spender as personal as ever, but with a tighter, more formal control. His themes are love and death, and birth and re-birth, and his *Elegy for Margaret* is perhaps the most moving and accomplished thing he has done. He is never fragmentary : his experiences are complete in themselves, and he expresses them with an equal completeness, and with the same extraordinary perceptiveness and sensuousness, and with that mounting power of the extended image of which he is a master. These fine poems make his Shakespearian juggle with eye and I poor taste.

I like, too, very much, these poems of Mr. Herring. He draws strength from the Elizabethans. His images are sharp, and he writes concisely and with precision, and any tendency to cynicism is balanced by a wise humour and a faith in the " divinity of man." He has an inheritance from Herrick, not in subject, but manner. He uses the short lyric form well, and some poems, especially *A Praying Love Song*, are superb achievements.

Miss Chadwick is in love with creation : there are poems for her everywhere. She has so much to say that verse itself seems inadequate, so that certain poems are like forms hewn out of a great rock of words, almost Beethovian. Others have a singing and incantatory quality not unlike Rilke. Her's is raw, vigorous and vital poetry with full and sensuous imagery ; and this little book is a living one.

HARDIMAN SCOTT

The Cosmic Shape : Ross Nichols & James Kirkup (Forge Press 8s. 6d.).
The Haunted Garden : Henry Treece (Faber 7s. 6d.).
Hinterland : Hal Summers (Dent 6s. od.).
Break In Harvest : Roland Mathias (Routledge 5s. od.).
The Poet's Cat : compiled by Mona Gooden (Harrap 7s. 6d.).

'MYTHOLOGY,' said Marx, 'disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature.' Mr. Ross Nichols, in a long and interesting essay which precedes the poems of Mr. Kirkup and himself, deplores the fact that myth has vanished and argues most convincingly that man's necessity for myth is as great as ever. He concludes with an appeal to all writers who are thinking on similar lines to assist in spreading the 'appropriate poetic gospel for this generation' beyond a mere literary public, in order to encourage a sense of divine mystery in natural processes and to obtain a truer relationship between man and nature.

How does the doctrine affect the work of these poets? Mr. Nichols confines himself to easily recognisable types and symbols. In his long poem of four movements, *Cosmic Legend*, he employs what he calls Myth Fusion, by which various myths are co-ordinated in a cycle of four phases of the seasonal drama. In the Second Movement, for instance, Adonis, Horus, Arthur, Osiris, the sacred Bull of Mithra, and the lost Grail, are all identified as representing the same phase—the trance of death. It is skilfully done but there are a number of inconsistencies which will make it bewildering to those readers who are not familiar with the ancient mysteries. Mr. Nichols is more successful in his short lyrics like *Seascape Song*, *Taliesin* and *Norse*.

Mr. Kirkup uses an indirect approach in his two long poems, *The Glass Fable* and *The Sleeper in the Earth*, but one is never in doubt as to the validity of his medium or the rich quality of his work. He is a subtler craftsman than Mr. Nichols and has more thoroughly assimilated his material or, to be correct, the material has more thoroughly assimilated him :

> "You, clouds, that go
> before me if I am the wind,
> and die for me if I am rain or snow,
> and are made whole again, somewhere,
> somehow, by a secret all shall know . . ."

The second poem, in which the cosmic shape of *The Sleeper* emerges from the poet's dreamlike imagination, moves on different levels of experience and demonstrates, beyond all theories, the intrinsic value of poetry.

Mr. Henry Treece, one of the leaders of the Apocalypse Group, has defined myth as ' the projection of the self into the world at large,' but his latest volume reveals an assured development from his early Apocalyptic conceptions. There is less concentration of imagery, fewer syntactical artifices, and the influence of Hopkins and Dylan Thomas, previously so marked, is indiscernible. Consequently, his poems have a greater purity and coherence ; if, at times, they border upon the naive :

> " Little green frog in the strawberry leaves,
> I'll tell you now,
> Poets, thank God, are tearing wolves,
> But not to you.
> Their enemies are men whose decalogues
> Can find no place for love, and little frogs."

It is true that there are none of the memorable lines of his earlier books, yet the general standard of achievement is higher. Mr. Treece is a talented poet and this book should help to increase his growing reputation.

There is more reflection than music in *Hinterland.* Mr. Hal Summers seems to remain detached from his subject (even in his *Love Poem* !) and to find a stimulus for philosophy in almost everything he sees, from sea-shells to mountains. It is this characteristic, together with rare technical skill, which dominates his work and makes him such an individual poet. His attempt to penetrate the subconscious mind in the title poem is a failure for this very reason ; he is unwilling, or unable, to write subjectively, and the subconscious is not to be explored by remote control. Mr. Summers has a gift for presenting the unusual aspect and is at his best when elaborating upon classic themes as in *Leda Speaks* and *Ariadne on Naxos.*

Break in Harvest, the first book of Mr. Roland Mathias, is mainly concerned with the local inhabitants and landscape of Wales :

> " Close to I clear
> The mind for mystery, the ear for earthbeat."

And what a receptive mind he has. This is not to suggest that he imitates, in form or subject matter, the Georgian Week-enders with their unrealistic outlook upon country life. He has a highly concentrated style of his own which for the most part is extremely effective

in creating atmosphere, though it results, occasionally, in a line that is awkwardly constructed. In *Fulwell* he strikes a deeper note and gives some indication of his future development.

The publishers of *The Poet's Cat* announce that this anthology 'is designed not only for those who are aware of the beauty and grace of the cat, but also for those who admire the same qualities in poetry.' Miss Gooden has certainly covered a wide field on behalf of her fellow cat-worshippers—from the 6th Century to the present time; and the volume includes translations from Arabic, French, Greek, Latin and early Irish poems. Many of the well-known and some of the lesser-known English poets are represented. There is, in fact, something for everyone here. My own choice lies in the direction of Dorothy Sayers' *War Cat* and T. S. Eliot's *Macavity*.

HOWARD SERGEANT

Baudelaire: translated by G. A. Wagner (Falcon Press 7s. 6d.)
The Mountain: Geoffrey Johnson (Williams & Norgate 3s. 6d.
Eleven Sonnets: John Graddon (Cyril Edwards 3s. 6d.)
Spring Song: Arnold Moon (Cyril Edwards, Handmade 10s. 6d., Machine 3s. 6d.)

NO FRENCH poet of the last century has a better claim to the attention of present-day readers than Charles Baudelaire, and the Falcon Press is to be congratulated on a volume which offers a choice of his finest poems. The book includes a lucid and comprehensive introduction by Miss Enid Starkie, who combines a knowledge of the poet's history with a just criticism of his work. Poems are presented in the original and in English translation by Mr. G. A. Wagner. The translations do succeed in conveying the poet's vivid imagery but give scarcely a hint of his subtle and flexible rhythms. For this reason, I feel that only a rhymed version could be entirely successful. Such a translation would be difficult to achieve, but not impossible; as witness Mr. Norman Cameron's translations from Rimbaud—a poet no easier than Baudelaire.

Mr. Geoffrey Johnson's new poems maintain a very equal standard. He is at his best in his precise and picturesque landscape poems, and in his songs, sometimes light and gay, sometimes quiet and serene in mood. His most frequent theme is the English countryside, and to this theme he brings an elegant style and graceful fancy well adapted to each changing mood.

Eleven Sonnets by Mr. John Graddon and *Spring Song* by Mr. Arnold Moon are excellent examples of well-produced books, and the printing and quality of paper are a credit to the publisher. Mr. Graddon's

poems have great technical perfection, and in the difficult sonnet form he achieves originality and vigour of thought. His themes are the traditional ones of nature, love, birth and death. Mr. Moon's long rhapsodic poem is less even in quality, but as a whole is well balanced and musical. This poem is an interesting and promising experiment, and the writer should attain high standards in the future if he will guard against the danger of sacrificing precision of expression for the sake of rhyme.

ALEC SMITH

Paris Symphony: John Redwood Anderson (Harrap 6s. od.)
A Book of Australian Verse: Chosen by Walter Murdoch (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford University Press 7s. 6d.)

IF THE immutable vision and technical grace of a long poem are touchstone of a poet's achievement, then *Paris Symphony* establishes Mr. Anderson's claim beyond question. His theme is suggested by the relative positions, in the Louvre at Paris, of *Venus de Milo* (representing unattainable perfection) and the *Victory of Samothrace* (man's eternal striving for that perfection). The classical symphony form which the poet selects to clothe these contrasting, yet closely related elements, is both natural and original; his fidelity to it impeccable.

These lines (addressed to Venus) express the essence and penetration of his philosophy: "You are that distance/native to love,/that, from beyond this life's horizon,/calls for ever/the exile which is man." We should forgive Mr. Anderson his single weakness of ineffective repetition, for usually—like his Apollo— he "stretches his bright curved bow" that lucid phrase or image may fly from it; and he seldom misses his mark.

How many of us, I wonder, have read as many as half a dozen Australian poems? If the number is as small as I imagine, then it is certainly not the fault of the poets 'down under'—for in the last three decades alone they have created a vigorous and distinctive poetic culture. But it is upon the earlier work that Mr. Murdoch calls chiefly, and his new edition of this established anthology will serve some as an introduction to Australian verse. He is catholic enough to include a few such virile contemporaries as Flexmore Hudson with time-honoured Adam Lindsay Gordon and others. Unfortunately he precludes most of those younger living poets for whom Australian poetry will be famous in days to come. Nevertheless, we may thank Mr. Murdoch for his contribution to the flow of poetry from the Commonwealth countries.

LIONEL MONTEITH

Moments of Time: W. J. Strachan (Sylvan Press 6s. od.)

THE difference between a bad and minor poet is one of quality, not quantity. The first fails to find a verbal equivalent which validly expresses his experience, while the second concerns himself with expressing experiences of small dimension. When the minor poet out-reaches himself and attempts to convey a vast experience, he then becomes a bad poet. One cannot, after all, use a crochet-needle to fabricate the walls of a cathedral.

From this poetic presumption the present book is entirely free. Many of these poems are slight in thought and structure (and I find the slighter ones the best), but with a kind of accurate slightness, a small-scale deftness, a minute precision.

In some of the author's landscape pieces, written in a delicate free-verse whose cool timbres of tone are supplemented by a sensitive use of assonance, one feels—as the poet says in a *Tribute to Virginia Woolf*— " each word weighed out and placed with craftsman's care." So, when the book is read and closed the memory of certain images: three sapling poplars as " arrows flighted sunwards ";

" The tuft of straw, the handful of hay that lingers
Tossed on the telegraph-struts by Winter-squall ";

and the " fitful gleams of sunshine " on " A few bistre leaves " may stay behind in the reader's thoughts to prove how real was this recent slender contact. A light-weight integrity today counts for much.

DEREK STANFORD

MUSIC AND POETRY

Gatherings will be held on the Second Monday of every Month Until May 1948, at the:—

ETHICAL CHURCH HALL, Queensway, Bayswater, London

Tea: 6-15 p.m. — — — — Meeting: 7 p.m.